1:Sanders Z-54 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

A Village Baptism

One ceremony which has deep meaning for the family members is the baptism of a recently arrived infant. First of all comes the selection of godparents, although this is usually determined by the custom of having those who were sponsors at the wedding also be godparents of the children which issue from that marriage. But if many children have come subsequently it is only fitting that the honor be given to someone else. The father is free to invite some notable, say a political figure from the area, to serve as godfather, an opportunity which few politicians pass up. On the other hand, if the couple is dissatisfied with the godparent who would normally be invited, it may follow traditional procedures to select another. An inquiry into these takes one deeply into folklore and belief in magic. When childlessness, stillbirth, or infant mortality is blamed upon the godparent, villagers assume that a new godparent might lead to better success. According to Chrysoula, the wise woman of Spetsai, her sister bore a child who died within twenty-four hours after birth, and later on she had a pseudo-pregnancy. In her desperation she prayed to the Virgin: "Please give me a child of either sex. If it is a girl I'll give her your name; if it is a boy I'll dedicate it to you but will have to give it the name of its paternal grandparent." This was on the morning of March 25 (Evangelismos Day); that afternoon she had intercourse with her husband and on Christmas Day a little girl was born. As soon as she was able, the mother picked up the baby, put the baby on the porch of the church dedicated to the Virgin, and waited to see who would discover the baby and, by so doing, be designated godparent. People standing around consider it lucky to be a godparent on such an occasion, and several may be inclined to volunteer. An especially eager person may throw a handkerchief ahead of a rival and thus stake out a claim. The mother watches from a distance. When the child has been taken into the church for the ceremony, she goes home to prepare sweets and other food for the baptismal feast.

The same procedure for gaining a new godparent as a replacement for the one who sponsored the wedding of the couple is followed in most parts of Greece but occurs only infrequently, since people reluctantly change their godparent ties. Once the godparents have been selected, the guests have to be invited — relatives and very close friends or, as was fortunate in my case, an interested foreigner who happens to be in the vicinity. The women of the household allow themselves a few days in advance to plan and prepare for the festive occasion. The church ceremony is a lively affair. If the child is baptized within forty days of birth, as it usually is, the mother does not attend, for she is still unclean. The principals in the ceremony are the priest, the infant, and the godparent, with the latter's responsibility supposedly extending to the spiritual oversight of the godchild, today a matter of

1:Sanders Z-5/4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

Religious Holidays and Namedays

Family members, however, do not have to wait for the coming of an annual festival or fair to find an occasion for dancing or taking things easy. There are many other religious holidays calling for special observances in addition to Easter, the most important, and the Twelve Days surrounding Christmas. For example, Greek civil servants observe, with pay, approximately twenty-five holidays throughout the year, and industrial workers honor about half this number, some of them with pay. The villager, closer to the traditions for which the holidays stand, will celebrate the full twenty-five and others added for good measure.

To trace all of these holidays would call for a detailed Calendar of Customs, a list far too lengthy to be incorporated here even if one had mastered through the years the many regional variations throughout Greece.[6] What is more important is the realization that holidays do play an important part in adding rhythm and color to family and community life, as well as indicating to the farmer, whose agricultural work cycle is closely meshed with the regularly recurring holidays, that it is time for him to take up or finish some important activity.

I tend to associate each of the major Greek holidays with the particular village or city I happened to be in at the time of its observance. On one May Day, for example, I was in the heart of the Peloponnesos where groups of school children with their teachers were taking walks through the fields, an excursion-picnic. And, then, in the early afternoon to be invited to participate in the festivities at the school proved pleasant indeed. An important part of the activities was the hanging of the wreath over the door of the school, a pagan custom supposed to drive away evil.

Near Phlorina, in 1953 and again in Athens in 1955, I observed the commemoration of the holiday in honor of St. John the Baptist on June 24. This pagan midsummer festival has survived on into the present so much so that even in Athens, to say nothing of the villages, on St. John's Eve small boys light fires in the yards or streets and jump over them. One is supposed to burn all worthless things as a symbol of purification of the house and, as token of personal purification, one jumps over the fire while shouting "I leave my sins and my fleas behind me."[7] Into the same fire the peasants throw the withered May Day wreaths. This too is the evening when the girls of the village seek to learn their fortunes from the "dumb" or speechless water which a maiden or, in some places a young boy, brings from the fountain while remaining absolutely quiet despite the efforts of the bystanders to make the bearer talk. Later, each girl drops some easily identified possession into the jar which is "locked" until the next evening, thereby giving the name of *kledona* (from *kledi*, key) to this particular custom. When it is unlocked, the girls sing songs which foretell

1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

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The second, third, and fourth of January are ordinary working days, but on January 5 people expect a half-day off since it is Epiphany Eve, at which time children also sing the kalenda about the baptism of "the child of God." There is a five o'clock service in the morning at which occurs the first blessing of the waters. Those in attendance have brought jugs or cups for the blessed water which they take home to use in curing the sick or preventing the Evil Eye during the year. But on Epiphany itself occurs the most spectacular second blessing of the water, done in front of everybody at the church or near some body of water into which the cross is thrown. Swimmers are ready to dive in after it and struggle for its possession. The one who succeeds in gaining it is not only assured of good luck during the year but he can pass throughout the crowd and even the community to collect money from those solicited.

On Epiphany the priest visits the homes of the parish to bless each room by sprinkling holy water there, thus guaranteeing that all kallikantzari[1] have been exorcised and chased back to their lairs beneath the earth until the next Twelve Days comes around.

Easter brings with it a wealth of customs, a blend of the pagan and the Christian, which are lightened by the coming of spring and the renewal of nature. Although they are "all of a piece" in the peasant mind, they can be best understood by the outsider in terms of Carnival, Lent, and Holy Week.

Carnival begins nine weeks before Easter and runs for three weeks. The second week is climaxed by Meat Sunday and the third week by Cheese Sunday. This is the time for weddings which otherwise could not take place until after Easter; this is the time for masquerades, although these are less pronounced in the villages than in the cities; this is also the time when family groups get together for little feasts before the Great Fast starts forty days before Easter. The last two Saturdays of Carnival and the first Saturday of Lent are *psychosabbata*, or memorial days for the dead. On the Thursday of the middle week of Carnival, members of the family, bringing their own food with them, gather in the home of the eldest relative to have a special meal, and on this occasion they allow some dish to scorch on the stove and smell up the house in the belief that this will bring good luck. This day is called *tsichnopempti*, since *tsichna* stands for the odor of burning flesh.

Meat Sunday is the eighth one before Easter (the villagers count Easter as one of the Sundays). On this day the people are supposed to start doing without meat products for the Lenten period. On the following Sunday, called Cheese Sunday, the forbidden foods are broadened to include milk products as well. This latter holiday is especially colorful in many parts of Greece, for on this day the village boys prepare piles of wood on various heights to be lit after dark. This is also the day for visiting older relatives

[1] [These are bad spirits – ANALYST]

1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

and godparents in order to beg their forgiveness. Before the evening meal begins the younger members of the family kneel before their parents to ask their pardon for a wrongdoing and to receive a blessing. Carnival is definitely at an end.

Over and over again I asked local informants how many of the people kept the Great Fast before Easter. In the villages the replies were often as high as 80 percent of the older people, but more and more it seems that the younger generation keeps the fast for the one week immediately following Cheese Sunday and then takes it lightly until the Holy Week just prior to Easter. The villagers do not find it hard to give up meat because they actually have little available, but they do find that doing without eggs and cheese is restrictive. The pious manage to live on vegetables, bread, olives, and fruit.

Lent gets off to a frantic start with Clean Monday (*Kathara Deftera*), which is supposedly a period of purification of body and soul. Kitchen utensils are polished until they shine, walls whitewashed to make them look like new, floors scrubbed, and everything made ready for the big holiday which is in store. Townspeople in particular spend this day with their families on a picnic, with many localities having favorite spots that may originally have had a sacred meaning.

Eight days before Easter is the Day of St. Lazarus. On its eve the young girls sing what are called Lazarus songs, and on the day itself they go visiting. They are decorated with flowers and hold palm or laurel branches in their hands. They represent the death and resurrection of Lazarus and receive presents in return for their performance. On this day, too, there are frequently dances in the village squares.

On Palm Sunday the palm or laurel branches are woven into the form of a cross, around which several folk beliefs center. For example, some villagers believe they can tell the future from the cross; and others say this palm cross can be used against the Evil Eye.

Holy Week finds the emotional build-up for Easter increasing day by day. On Monday the housewives put everything in order, particularly if bad weather previously has kept them from getting all the cleaning done. The devout go to church, usually in the evening, although a liturgy is held in the morning as well. In some villages the residents may tie rags in their front door to keep away insects. On Tuesday the people do very little regular work because, as the housewives put it, "we are getting ready for Easter." On Wednesday those attending the morning service are anointed with oil on the forehead, chin, and cheeks (sign of the cross) and, in rural areas, new yeast is prepared in the church and distributed to families for use throughout the year. On Holy Thursday everybody takes the afternoon off, "for it was on this afternoon that Christ was seized." To commemorate the crucifixion in the evening service, the priests read twelve passages from

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So the bishop arranged for nuns at a convent on the edge of town to teach some of the girls to spin and weave silk. For two hundred years the nuns of this convent have been leaders in the silk industry. In 1770, under the Turks, the nuns with their abbess were exiled to Constantinople, went to Broussa, and learned the manipulation of silk. Later, when they were able to come back to Kalamata, they brought with them the silkworm eggs and started the silk industry. Many local girls come to the convent to learn how to carry on silkworm production and weaving on a simple loom at home. So, the bishop thought, these same nuns would be able to teach these orphan girls the silk industry, and many other things as well. When we visited the convent, eighteen girls were living there, but buildings were nearing completion which would accommodate up to fifty girls. Queen Frederika had come to help dedicate the cornerstones. But the nuns were anxious to show us where they produced the fine silk cloth we had been admiring. It was a strange experience to go with the nuns into the big room full of textile machines and to see the dexterity with which these women clad in medieval garments managed the complex machinery, even to the point of making many mechanical repairs.

One institution which the bishop showed us with evident pride was a tuberculosis sanatorium. To reach it we had to ride from his palace through the town to a mountain a few miles distant. We could not help notice the people's affection for the bishop: men, upon seeing him, would take off their hats and women would cross themselves. Some of this, we knew, was done because he was a bishop and thus due a certain amount of reverence, but the expression of warmth on the faces of the people indicated their genuine appreciation of what the bishop was doing for them.

When we arrived at the sanatorium, the bishop explained: "Why should a few old monks have such a beautiful site to live in when tuberculosis was proving such a scourge to so many people? I told the monks they could go pray somewhere else and that we would make this into a sanatorium." Of course, the bishop admitted that he was oversimplifying the problem a bit, for even the Greek Orthodox Church has its red tape. In any event, he had succeeded in getting about twenty patients out into this healthful spot under proper care. One of the first things he did upon our arrival was to go check the menu posted in the kitchen, for he takes a personal interest in what is being served to the patients.

While at the sanatorium we noticed a number of donkeys tied outside and many peasant men and women sitting at the door of the little church dedicated to St. Elijah. We learned that many of these peasants had come quite far on this Sunday and had brought gifts of food and oil to the sanatorium as *psychiko*, a word which comes from Byzantine times and means property donated to monasteries or churches by pious pilgrims for the salvation of their souls. These peasants proved a lighthearted group, probably

1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

783 788 because the mere act of bringing whatever they had to contribute gave them an emotional uplift.

793 But still we had not seen the end of the bishop's good works. In 1949 he had organized a home for the aged where seventy elderly people live in [737] relative comfort. The most ambitious project of all, however, was a poly- technic school started for the youth of the area. He had already spent about [874] $37,000 on the first floor alone. The school had opened the previous [177] November (1952) and already had two hundred pupils. Here was an in- stitution that the Marshall Plan had helped. The school bore the name Papaflessa, in honor of one of the Greek patriots of the war of independ- [743] ence. While looking over this school we also learned about one more ac- tivity, a hospital of one hundred and fifty beds whose foundation had just recently been laid by the bishop and his coworkers.

793 794 The financing of even one of these undertakings, not to say the whole complement of institutions, would be a staggering task in any country, especially in one as poorly endowed as Greece. Although the bishop never confided the secret of his success, I heard from others that skillful diplomacy had stood him in good stead. He would start with a certain amount that he could take from his bishop's fund; he would then go to Athens and per- suade the people in the Welfare Ministry that local people would match the funds of the central government if it would contribute; then, back home, he would call together the leading businessmen and say that he could get so much from the central government if they would put up such-and-such an amount. Since all parties did their share, he was able to get the necessary money for capital expenditures.

793 794 For the operation of these institutions, and their total number of in- mates or patients is considerable, he draws upon other resources. Some of the people in his diocese upon death will to some specified institution their [428] homes, olive groves, or money. Instead of having an expensive memorial [769] service, with several priests, for a dead relative at the stated periods re- quired by the church, the people are having simple memorial services and giving the difference in what they would pay to an institution; instead of buying expensive wreaths, they are giving the money to the foundling home, the sanatorium, or perhaps the old people's home. The bishop, too, has organized the rural parishes so that each parish turns over olive oil, meat, cheese, and eggs to a person who collects this produce and distributes to the institution. Or, as already mentioned, some of the people want to bring their contributions in person. Many are asked to donate labor: one builds a door, another puts in windows, and everybody has a sense of participating.

Visiting the bishop raised many questions in my mind about all that I had learned in America about modern child-welfare practices, care of the [748] aged, and the like. Social work as a profession is just getting a start in Greece; much humanitarian activity is carried on by upper-class women of

1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

the cities in the spirit of *noblesse oblige*. Under the circumstances in Greece today, nothing could seem more natural to the local people than to have the church, in the person of a gifted bishop, work out arrangements to meet their pressing welfare needs. How such a complicated network of institutions would be kept going should the energetic bishop not be around was a matter that gave one pause; but one must live in the present when human lives are at stake, and that is what the bishop was doing. He was following a well-established practice in making the church the channel for helping others.

The kind of help called *psychiko* is done for the soul, for the forgiveness of the souls of one's dead loved ones; it is customarily given in the form of helping the poor members of the community — the sick, the widows, and the orphans — out of purely Christian feeling. When some family is suffering misfortune in a village, the priest announces the fact in church and invites those who can help to do so. This is a form of aid in which those helping are not usually repaid, which makes it differ from the kinds of mutual aid discussed in an earlier chapter. In Koroni, in the western Peloponnesos, for instance, if a widow needs a crop harvested or threshed, grapes picked, or some field work done, the priest will announce that on such and such a day this widow has *xelassi*, as this arrangement is called, and those who wish can go to help. She feeds them, but they derive a spiritual rather than a material benefit from the work they contribute.

Or in Epirus, some important member of the community, not the priest, may send out the town crier or field guard to call from some height: "Listen, village, tomorrow we will carry from the mountain some wood for the home of Kyra Tassena, the widow of Tasso. All those who have mules must send them and those who haven't got any must come to help. Nobody must be missing." [18] He will then close with the proverb, *tona cheiri nivi talo kai ta dio to prosopo* (the one hand washes the other, and both of them the face).

Sundays and holidays, days on which peasants are not supposed to work in their own fields, are quite suitable for psychiko, or work done for the good of one's soul. D. A. Petropoulos, on whose article much of this discussion of psychiko is based, maintains that what characteristically distinguishes Christian philanthropy from ancient Greek philanthropy is that the first connects religion with the salvation of the soul, while in the ancient days help was given out of a purely logical understanding in order to have a normal social and communal system.[19]

The transition from this method of dealing with human need to the professional approach of contemporary social work is quite a leap. What progress is being made in training social workers in Greece is through the Young Women's Christian Association (but this again is a semireligious attachment), or through the Queen's Fund, providing scholarships at Pierce College.

1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

783 748 Pierce College. It is hard for most Greeks, no matter how highly trained, to bring into the social worker–client relationship an objectivity modeled on the doctor–patient relationship. The Greek social worker finds it difficult to think of the client as a case and almost immediately empathizes or scolds in a way that would be considered quite unprofessional by American standards. Psychiko, hardly the twentieth-century rationale for social welfare, continues strong in Greece today, and the Bishop of Messenia is doing much to keep it alive in his diocese, which seems much the better for it.

The Peasant Confronts Death

761 773 775 The peasant assumes that there is an afterlife and talks about doing kind deeds "for the good of the soul." But these practical villagers do not talk much about death, although they do have some fixed beliefs and prescribed customs which stand them in good stead when confronting it. For example, there is the matter of Charon who, according to the beliefs of ancient Rome, was the boatman transporting the dead across the River Styx. I shall never forget the sensation of riding along in the northern Peloponnesos between Kleitoria and Kalavryta, enjoying the bright May afternoon, when my interpreter pointed out a small and pleasant stream said to be the waters of the Styx.[17] Greek peasants do not assign the same role to Charon as did the Romans, for they think of Charon as death itself, or as the angel of death whom God sends down to bring back the soul of someone whose time on earth has run its course. There are many songs and stories about Charon, who is personified as one who wrestles with individuals for their lives or who uses craft to draw the soul out of the body. From time to time he is supposed to have displayed something akin to human sympathy:

> *God and Death:* Once upon a time God sent death to reap a soul but when death heard the lamentation of the relations and saw the beauty of the girl whose soul he was supposed to reap, he felt sorry and returned to heaven without accomplishing his mission. When God asked him why he didn't bring the soul, death replied that he couldn't stand the crying and despair that he had heard and seen. God got very angry and hit death so that he became deaf, blind, and lame. He made him deaf so that he couldn't hear the crying, blind so that he couldn't see whether the soul to be taken away belonged to an old person or a child, and lame so that he could not run away from the place where he was sent.[18]

761 775 [772] Although church art, depicting the medieval Christian conception of heaven and hell, has had some effect upon the view peasants take of "the next world," the people very often reveal a more basic belief in Hades as "a common meeting-place of all whose lives are ended, without distinction of merit. Death is a deprivation of the joys of life, which, with all its troubles and cares, is sweet. The old uneasy feeling that after death it is

1:Sanders Z-5,√ (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

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Throughout Greece, even in the cities, people never go to their own home or a friend's home from a funeral without first stopping somewhere for a sweet. In many villages it is the custom to wash one's hands before entering the house.

765 775 782 262 [769] [824]

The official period of mourning lasts for two years. Part of the complex of traits connected with mourning is the Feasts of the Dead held at fixed periods, such as the eighth and the fortieth day after burial. Similarly, on the anniversary of the death a feast of remembrance is held. On such occasions the grave is decorated with flowers, a mass is sung, and offerings of *kollyva* are made in the church. Kollyva is "parboiled wheat mixed with pounded walnuts, raisins and parsley, and covered over with a coating of sugar, with the sign of the cross, and sometimes the initials of the deceased worked on it in raisins. The wheat is interpreted as a symbol of the resurrection: as the grain is buried in the earth, rots, and rises again in the shape of a blooming plant, so will the soul rise from the tomb. . . ." [34]

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In addition to these ceremonies for deceased individual members of a family, the Greek villagers also have collective feasts for the dead known as Souls' Sabbath (*psychosavvata*), which correspond roughly with spring and harvest, or the life and death cycle of the year. Relatives visit the graves where they leave sweetmeats, parboiled grain, and cakes, and where they kneel and cry beside the tombs as the priests read prayers over them. It is a memorable experience for a foreigner to come unexpectedly upon a graveyard where as many as one hundred and fifty people are wailing over different graves and to see the priests in their colorful robes and with their swinging censers move from one small group to the next.

766 764 [292] [783]

Priests when they die are treated differently. With an ordinary person the bowl used when the dead are washed for burial is broken and thrown away; but with the priest (in Spetsai at least) it cannot be broken, but is thrown into the sea. The priest's body is not put in a shroud but is dressed by another priest in a *peritrachelion*, or stole which a priest wears when he hears confessions. Also, the first book from which the priest read after becoming a priest is put in the coffin with him. There is another difference, too. At the end of three years after burial, it is customary to dig up the bones of the deceased and wash them in wine and water, but the bones of a priest are washed with oil. When the bones are disinterred, they are put in a basket and taken home to be put under a table on which there is boiled wheat. The priest reads a prayer; the people kiss the skull, put it in the box with the other bones, and this is put in a vault in the cemetery.

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Much is made of the condition of the bones. If they are yellowish-brown, this means that the person lived a good life; if they are black, he lived badly. It is also considered a bad omen if the body has not disintegrated.

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An excellent summary of the way the peasant fits death into the general scheme of things comes from a study by V. T. Valassis:

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346 361 764 [783] [312] Generally, in the old villages the church is in the outskirts. To the back of the church is the cemetery, which is walled to keep out both wild predatory animals and farm animals. For Greeks it is a sin to step on a grave. The church may have a belltower, or the bell may be hung from the branch of an old tree. There is always a well in the churchyard and the cemetery of the old village. It is used as drinking water and for the purification after a burial. The main church of the old village must be the tallest, the largest, and the best-constructed building of the village. This signifies respect for God; the past is not forgotten. This is very much after the pattern of the ancient Greeks who built their shrines as the best buildings while they themselves lived in huts. . . .

Both the church and the cemetery of the old village must be located in a landscape of natural beauty and scenery. Thus faith, worship, and death are in close relation with the natural scenery.[25]

[178] [769] But Valassis adds a discordant note. The new churches are now being constructed in the center of the village, while the cemeteries remain on the outskirts. No longer, therefore, do the peasants, after a Mass or ceremony, go to the graveyard to pay respect to their ancestors.

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
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793 [795] direct personal responsibility, and delegates comparatively little to his curates. The ministry of the word, for example, is always the work of the bishop: the most that the parish priest is permitted to do is to read a homily sent him by his diocesan. In some dioceses the metropolitan alone preaches, and the country people hear sermons only when he is able to visit their villages. As a rule, however, the bishop will be assisted by a *hierokryx* or 'sacred herald'—'preacher' seems a miserably inadequate translation of such a splendid word—who is normally a priest-monk (though he may sometimes be a lay theologian), and lives in the metropolis. Often, too, the bishop and his *hierokryx* will be assisted by several lay preachers who go out into the villages Sunday by Sunday to preach at the liturgy.

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Thus, at Siderokastro (the 'Iron Castle'), close to the Bulgarian frontier, the Metropolitan, the Lord Basil, finding himself, when the refugees began to return to their villages in the summer of 1949, with only one priest qualified to assist him in the ministry of the word, formed a little society of lay preachers known as the Guardians of Spiritual Enlightenment, which included the headmaster of the local high school and one of his assistant masters, as well as the doctor and the dentist of the town and two or three other educated laymen, several of whom now go out to preach in the surrounding villages every Sunday.

A friend who visited the diocese of Chalkis during the 'thirties has told me of the ancient Fiat which used to leave the metropolis at daybreak every Sunday and scatter monkish theologians among the hamlets of Euboea. At Kozani, in western Macedonia, no sooner were the roads reasonably clear of mines in the summer of 1949 than the Metropolitan started to send out every Saturday afternoon an army truck laden with young catechists who would spend the week-end preaching and teaching in remote villages of the diocese and return to their work or their school on Monday morning.

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What is true of preaching applies also to the sacrament of penance; it is to the bishop, not to his parish priest, that the villager who is oppressed with the consciousness of grave sin will turn for the benefits of absolution and ghostly counsel. The Greek priest is not allowed to act as a confessor without the express authorisation of his bishop. "As for Confession", says Covel, "it is not to be made to every ordinary Priest, but only to such Confessors . . . who are chosen out of monasteries, and are solemnly appointed and authorised to this Office . . . so that a regular or secular Priest not thus qualified, durst not attempt to

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take it." In the *Great Euchologion*, or Prayer Book, of the Greek Church the order for confession is in fact immediately preceded by a short office for the making of a *pneumatikos*, or spiritual father, in which the bishop, after he has read the Gospel containing our Lord's words: "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained", addresses the would-be *pneumatikos* (who must, needless to say, be in priests' orders) as follows:

"Our mediocrity, through the grace of the all-holy and divine Spirit, promotes thee, the most pious N. *Pneumatikos*, to the ministry of spiritual fatherhood, etc."

Covel quotes ancient canons to the effect that "if any one without the Mandate of the Bishop of the place shall dare to receive . . . spiritual accounts and Confessions, such a one shall be Canonically punished as a Transgressor of the Divine Canons; because he hath not only destroy'd himself, but all they also who have been Confessed by him are still unconfessed, and whatever things he hath Bound or Loosed, are yet uncorrected". And again: "Let all the Priest-Monks, who take Confessions, or Bind and Loose know that our Holy Fathers will not suffer any Priests to reconcile Penitents without the Archbishop's Order". According to an old canonist "a Bishop may . . . according to his Judgment, give this Right or Power of receiving Confessions to a secular Priest, but this is to be done discreetly, to some choice or well approved Persons only, and upon some extraordinary occasions". [688]

Professor Bratsiotes, in the introduction which he contributed to the English translation of the life of the Archimandrite Eusebius Matthopoulos, observed that "unhappily there are very few confessors, because it is much more difficult to develop confessors than to train preachers; and it requires much individual genius and great maturity in virtue and experience to be a proper confessor". At the time when these words were written only eight members of the Zoë Confraternity—all trained theologians as they are—were licensed as confessors. In the country dioceses to-day the only clergy who are permitted to assist the bishop as *pneumatikoi* are the priest-monks attached to the metropolis; married priests who are authorised to hear confessions are rare indeed. [794]

What then of the parish clergy? There is no parallel in Greece to the country parson who has "read the Fathers also and the Schoolmen and the later writers", and who has been one of the fairest ornaments of the English Church these many centuries. The Greek country parson is a 793 [463]

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of Life have been most active, there have, as we shall see in a later chapter, been certain changes in liturgical practice during recent years: very often now the celebrant reads in an audible voice the whole of the *anaphora*, or great eucharistic prayer, which the rubric directs him to say *mystikos*—mystically, or secretly—and the whole congregation kneels at the invocation of the Holy Spirit. None of these influences had as yet reached this remote corner of New Greece, however, and the liturgy was still celebrated at Dasoto after the fashion which caused Robert de Dreux, in the seventeenth century, to observe that "it is not easy to see all that they do when they say mass, because the celebrant is hidden by a screen which shuts off the altar, and only shows himself three or four times". This, however, is a topic to which we shall have occasion to return.

The Lord's Prayer (like the Creed) was recited by a girl, and there were some thirty communicants including several children borne in the arms of their mothers—a familiar sight this in every Greek parish church. When the liturgy was ended, and the Bishop had distributed the blessed bread to the whole congregation, I observed some twenty of those who had communicated kneel before the royal doors while their father in God read a brief prayer of absolution. I have referred elsewhere to contemporary Greek practice in regard to the use of the mystery of confession. In the country districts at least, where confessors are rare, this is by no means as uniform as some are apt to suppose, or as might be inferred from the customs which obtain among the Russians of the diaspora, in Paris and elsewhere, with whom the sacrament has tended in recent times to become an obligatory part of the preparation for holy communion.

When one has fasted as a Christian one feasts as a Christian—in Greece at least.

> Then for their Festivals [says Dr. Covel] . . . there is not one that appears there but will contribute something, as his share, towards the providing of victuals and drink in abundance, (as at our old Whitsun-Ales, or setting up May-poles and the like in England) there is hardly one Greek so poor, but he will borrow, or pawn, or sell his very Cloaths, or something else, to get Money for Wine, to Celebrate the Festival; and it is the same Practice amongst them upon the Holydays set apart for the Virgin Mary, or any other

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788 west—been reduced to a mere shadow of its former self. Is not the Greek
796 Christian for all practical purposes a mere passive onlooker at a gorgeous spectacle performed by the resplendent ministers: even though the sacred participants in the divine drama sometimes descend from their apron stage and mingle with the audience?

It must be admitted that the average Greek layman communicates very rarely, often only once or twice a year; outside the immediate sphere of influence of the movements, hardly ever more than four times. This reluctance of the laity to communicate frequently is a phenomenon which has been common to east and west from a very early period—though in the west (among Orthodox of the diaspora as well as amongst western Christians) there has been a widespread return to something more nearly approaching primitive practice. Its causes are complex and, to a great extent, a matter for speculation. One factor which is peculiar to the east is the place which the *antidoron* has come to occupy. It would be an over-simplification to say that the blessed bread which the Greek Christian is accustomed to receive at the end of every liturgy is consciously looked upon as a substitute for the holy communion; nevertheless, the *antidoron* has a deep significance for the Greek layman —more, perhaps, than in other parts of the Orthodox world.

The reluctance to communicate frequently does not, as we can see from the history of certain movements within western Christendom, necessarily spring from carelessness and sloth; often it is due to a sense of unworthiness which is none the less real though it be considered misguided. Even in reforming circles in Greece to-day one discovers great wariness on the part of the clergy in recommending frequent, let
[783] alone daily, communion to their people. This is not, it is held, a matter to be undertaken lightly, or without the advice and approval of an experienced confessor; and few priests will permit their penitents to communicate as often as once a month unless they are satisfied that the desire goes hand in hand with a real determination to follow Christ in their daily life. To communicate every Sunday is regarded as an inestimable privilege, but one which is hardly for all men.

[782] Then we must not ignore the part played by the ordinary Christian
[769] in the offertory. In the country districts of Greece the housewife who bakes her bread on Saturday will set aside one loaf upon which she has
[369] stamped with a wooden seal a traditional design wherein the words "Jesus Christ conquers"—abbreviated to I(HCOY)C . X(PICTO)C . NI . KA—constitute the most prominent feature. Early on Sunday

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these circumstances it is understandable that contemporary preaching should (to accept the distinction now current in reforming circles) be practical rather than theoretical: should deal less with doctrine than with conduct.

Father Eusebius was wont to insist on the importance of ending every sermon with a clear and distinct conclusion, to bring home the particular moral and spiritual truth with which the preacher had been dealing to the conscience of his hearers, as well as on the need for preaching in a style suited to their condition. His example has been salutary, and in reforming circles to-day one never hears the type of homily still cultivated by a few eccentric saints who bewilder their silly sheep with florid discourses framed in the ornate periods of Psellos or Anna Comnena. I well recall a certain *hierokeryx*, a lovable if idiorrhythmic character, who modelled his festal homilies on the funeral orations of Bossuet (a much-thumbed volume that accompanied him everywhere). These triumphs of rhetoric, which must have left the Epirote peasantry groping in vain for any clear and distinct practical conclusion, would be composed months before the date of their delivery and constantly reworked and polished until they reached the requisite height of literary perfection. Such artistry would be frowned upon in the religious societies.

The work of the preacher is supplemented by that of the confessor. Although the mystery of confession has in practice fallen into sad neglect, owing to the shortage of qualified *pneumatikoi*, there has been no more effective instrument for the reawakening of the Greek Church; none that is more highly prized in reforming circles to-day. While east and west are at one as to the fundamental nature of this 'mystery', there is a certain difference of emphasis. Amongst the Greeks the element of 'ghostly counsel and advice' is far more prominent than is commonly the case amongst western Christians. So marked is this difference of emphasis that Dr. Covel—who is as immoderate in his assaults upon the Romish doctrine of auricular confession as upon any other of the 'seven pretended sacraments'—is yet moved to applaud the Greek practice as a pious and laudable institution: such a confession, he remarks, or rather (lest there should be any misunderstanding) "serious Conference or Discourse as this with a Ghostly Father, or discreet Minister, is justly observed and commended by our own Church".

In these circumstances it is natural that considerably more importance should be attached to the personal character and qualifications of the

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783 confessor amongst the Greeks than in the west. The power to bind and
793 to loose is given by the laying on of hands: the grace of the wise director of souls is conferred only upon a few, and is normally the fruit of great personal holiness and wide experience. Throughout Orthodox Christendom there has been a tendency to demand a high degree of perfection before authorising a priest to exercise the ministry of the confessor: one must oneself become a *spirituel* before aspiring to the office of a *père spirituel*.

The number of confessors at work in Greece to-day is still very small. In the country districts, in particular, this sacrament is still largely neglected. The ministry of the *pneumatikos* is nevertheless a factor of the very greatest importance in the present revival, and one which is held in the highest estimation, within the voluntary movements and the official Apostoliki Diakonia alike.

794 While preaching and the mystery of confession have thus been restored to something approaching their rightful place within the life of the Greek Church after long years of neglect, the leaders of the new movements have forged other weapons to meet the peculiar needs of the time. Chief amongst them must be mentioned the catechetical schools and Christian unions which are now so prominent a feature of Greek church life.

The creation of catechetical schools was essayed as early as the eighteen-seventies, but unsuccessfully, and it was the married priests George Makres and Mark Tsaktanes who were the real pioneers in this field. By the late 'twenties there were many catechetical schools flourishing in Athens and the Piraeus, especially under the direction of Father Angelos Nissiotes, who had taken over the movement founded by Father Mark at the latter's death in 1924. The Zoë Brotherhood (which had by this time emerged triumphant from two further attacks by suspicious hierarchs, and had also survived the premature death of one of the first and most ardent disciples of its founder, the Archimandrite Dionysios Pharazoules), first turned its attention to the organisation of catechetical schools in 1926. From this time onward these schools begin to establish themselves until at the present day Zoë alone has well over 600 under its supervision, and the movement of Father Angelos some 350, not to mention hundreds of others now flourishing in every part of Greece.

These schools (which are directed almost entirely by lay men and

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Of liturgical reform I have already had occasion to speak. Its primary object is to enable the laity to participate more fully and intelligently in the eucharistic action, through more frequent communion (Father Eusebius was himself in the habit of celebrating daily), and through a greater 'openness' in the manner of celebrating the holy mysteries. In Athens and Salonica many people now follow the services in the little manual of the Archimandrite Seraphim Papakostas—the popularity of which may be judged by the fact that it had reached its fifth edition by 1950. In general, where the new movements have exercised an effective influence, a high standard of liturgical propriety prevails, though it must be confessed that certain musical innovations of recent years have been unfortunate, to say the least.

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All the movements of which I have been speaking have remained quite unofficial in character, though they have always carried out their work with the blessing of the ecclesiastical authorities and under the general supervision of the local bishop. There has of late, however, been a development of a rather different nature, so important as to demand brief consideration. This is what amounts to the refounding of a body known as the 'Apostolic Diaconate of the Church of Greece', which came into being as long ago as 1930. I do not propose to dwell upon its fortunes prior to its virtual reconstitution: suffice it to say that although great potentialities were latent in this organisation from the outset, its actual activity during the first fifteen years of its life was on a very small scale. It is directed by a council of members of the Holy Synod and professors of the theological faculty of the University of Athens under the presidency of the Archbishop, with Professor Basil Vellas as general director.

The aim of this official organisation is to systematise and co-ordinate the many-sided missionary activity now being undertaken throughout the length and breadth of Greece. In addition to its headquarters at Moni Petraki in Athens it has a local office in every diocese, and is assured of a basis of material resources by a system of annual diocesan contributions.

The possibilities inherent in such a venture are without question very great, and already much has been accomplished. A theological hostel and a school for preachers and confessors have been established at Moni Petraki: the latter promises to be of the greatest service in the

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number of the students were experienced preachers and confessors from the provinces, but in the years to come they will normally consist in the main of young graduates of the theological school. The primary aim of this school is to equip priests (and lay theologians) for work in the dioceses, and it promises to be of the greatest service to the Church of Greece.

The same building serves as a hostel for theological students who live at some distance from Athens and who would otherwise be dispersed in lodgings (though some find a home in one of the hostels of the Zoë Brotherhood). All the inhabitants—theological students as well as those belonging to the School for Preachers—share a common life, with morning and evening prayers, and meals taken together in the refectory on the coenobitic pattern. Now that the theological faculty of the university is attracting students from Ethiopia and America, as well as from the autocephalous Church of Cyprus, and the Apostoliki Diakonia is offering generous hospitality to occasional Frankish visitors and a student or two from the Russian Academy in Paris, this community is fast acquiring an oecumenical character such as belonged to Halki in the day of its fame.

The theological faculty at Salonica, as I mentioned earlier, is of recent foundation. Despite the difficulties of the times, however, it is now in full vigour and holds out very great promise to the sorely-tried and understaffed dioceses of northern Greece. It is greatly to be hoped that it will prove possible before long to set up at Salonica an institution similar to that now flourishing in Athens, and combining the functions of a post-graduate theological college and a hostel for theological students from the outlying provinces. Many of these students at present have some difficulty in maintaining themselves for the period of their studies, and comparatively few can be accommodated in the new hostel of the Zoë Brotherhood or in the little hostel maintained for several years in the face of tremendous material difficulties by the Apostoliki Diakonia of Salonica.

At present there is an acute shortage of educated clergy in these the more remote provinces of Greece. Few dioceses have more than one priest-theologian and in some *eparchiai* the metropolitan is single-handed. In such circumstances preaching and the mystery of penance are inevitably much neglected. Not a few amongst the bishops of these northern dioceses are advocates of some kind of 'direction' of the educated clergy which would counteract the prevailing current which

/80 cont./
their humble houses and subsistence level of living the people like to build beautiful churches with high steeples and decorate them /81/ with as many ikons and church bells they can. The people of Megali Vrisi not being satisfied with the structure of the present church have already quarried stone from the nearby hills for their future church structure. When the farmers were notified to offer personal work for the church they did it without complaint.

The people look up to the church as an institution which gives them hope and courage in times of disappointment and discouragement. Once a year a confession is made in the church in front of the ikons and the priest. People tell of their bad acts and forgive those that caused them trouble. All wedding ceremonies, baptisms and name day celebrations take place in the church.

Attendance. Women and children attend the church regularly. The men are rather irregular in their attendance. This is not due to their negligence nor to their failure to respect the church, but is due to the long church services that last for three hours. The people get tired of going to the church. Most attend the last part of the services. In spite of the variety of music and ceremonial activities, the church is losing /82/ attendance. Men like to know what they hear in the church, and since it is all abstract to them they prefer to stay out and send their wives and children.

With the increase of modern scientific beliefs by the farmers, the church will be forced to change its course and adopt itself to the new social changes.

The membership is obligatory. Every one born in the village becomes a member. It is not necessary to keep in books the names of the members since the whole population of the village naturally belongs to the church.

Contributions. Every family has to contribute for the support of the priest and for the upkeep of the church. This contribution is paid in kind. Besides this the church has voluntary donations by people whose prayers are answered, and by others for the